



LEGISLATIVE BRIEF

SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER GRANTS

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Public Chapter 154 (2019) created school safety grants available to school districts to address security and safety needs, with part of the funds reserved for the establishment of school resource officer (SRO) grants to increase the number of SROs in schools without such positions. The SRO grant program supported the placement of 213 new full-time SROs in schools during the 2019-20 school year; 57 districts received grant funding that year. (See Exhibit 2 for a list of these districts.) The General Assembly approved \$20 million in non-recurring funding for this purpose.

Of the \$20 million total appropriation, the state awarded \$7.4 million for year one (FY 20) of a two-year SRO grant commitment. Funding remaining after the FY 20 allocation was used to fund continuation grants in FY 21 to maintain current SRO staffing levels.

School districts must successfully apply to the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) for SRO grant funds and are responsible for meeting a 25 percent local match, which is adjusted based on the district's fiscal capacity used in the Basic Education Program (BEP) formula. The local match requirement may be met through local funds, funds contributed by another entity, and/or in-kind expenses assumed by the school district. School districts must use the state grant for expenses directly related to placing an SRO in a school (i.e., salary, benefits, training, and equipment). Districts that use the SRO grant to expand the number of officers currently assigned to the district must provide a letter of commitment from the law enforcement executive (sheriff or chief of police) supplying the SRO.^A

What are SROs?

In Tennessee, SROs are duly sworn and authorized law enforcement officers, employed by a sheriff or police department, who meet all state training standards. SROs are required to receive 40 hours of specialized training within the first year of their assignment to a school and must obtain 16 hours of specialized training annually in subsequent years. Unlike SROs, security guards are not law enforcement officers and may be either school employees or contracted personnel.

The maximum SRO grant amount per eligible school is \$35,000 for each SRO assigned.

Exhibit 1: Application process for SRO grants

<p>School districts apply to TDOE outlining how the grant money will be used to address safety and security needs.</p> <p>TDOE prioritizes applicants without an SRO in the previous year.</p>	<p>The maximum grant amount for the first school year is \$35,000 per SRO assigned.</p> <p>A 25 percent local match is required from the district.</p>	<p>Districts awarded grant money must complete a mid-year report outlining how the grant money was used.</p>	<p>Grant funding awarded for the second/final year.</p> <p>Safe Schools grant funds may be used to fund SROs in subsequent years.</p>
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School districts must be in compliance with state laws, rules, and regulations regarding school safety to be eligible for an SRO grant. School districts must outline in their grant applications how the SRO grant funds will be used. Applications must also include an annual district budget including an SRO report, which identifies all schools that will hire an SRO for the first time using SRO grant funds, as well as those schools that will continue to fund existing SRO positions using a Safe Schools grant. See the box on page 2 for more information on Safe Schools grants.

The SRO report must also address the funding source or sources used for all SRO positions. SRO grant funding may not be used to replace local funding already being used to provide an SRO. Grantees must complete a mid-year report, which includes the number of SROs and security guards that were in school as of January 1.

^A In Tennessee, all SROs are employed by a sheriff or police department.

In addition to \$20 million in nonrecurring funds for SRO grants, Public Chapter 154 (2019) also included \$20 million in recurring funding for Safe Schools grants to all local school districts. Safe Schools grants can be used for various purposes, such as funding SRO positions, security-related facility upgrades, and violence prevention programs. Safe Schools grants are intended to reduce the possibility of violent or disruptive behavior and protect students and staff from harm.

Exhibit 2: Districts that received SRO grant funding for the 2019-20 school year

District	Awarded Allocation	Increase of SROs
Anderson County	\$ 455,000.00	13
Bartlett	\$210,000.00	6
Bells	\$35,000.00	1
Benton County	\$140,000.00	4
Bradford	\$35,000.00	1
Bristol City	\$175,000.00	5
Cleveland	\$35,000.00	1
Cocke County	\$245,000.00	7
Decatur County	\$26,700.00	1
Dickson County	\$175,000.00	5
Dyer County	\$175,000.00	5
Dyersburg	\$70,000.00	2
Elizabethton	\$105,000.00	3
Fayetteville	\$70,000.00	2
Gibson Co Sp Dist	\$175,000.00	5
Grainger County	\$70,000.00	2
Greene County	\$210,000.00	6
Greeneville	\$35,000.00	1
Grundy County	\$35,000.00	1
Hancock County	\$70,000.00	2
Hardeman County	\$245,000.00	7
Hawkins County	\$210,000.00	6
Haywood County	\$35,000.00	1
Hollow Rock	\$35,000.00	1
Houston County	\$105,000.00	3
Humphreys County	\$70,000.00	2

District	Awarded Allocation	Increase of SROs
Jackson County	\$70,000.00	2
Johnson County	\$175,000.00	5
Lake County	\$70,000.00	2
Lauderdale County	\$70,000.00	2
Lexington	\$70,000.00	2
Marshall County	\$140,000.00	4
McNairy County	\$70,000.00	2
Milan	\$35,000.00	1
Montgomery County	\$420,000.00	12
Morgan County	\$70,000.00	2
Obion County	\$175,000.00	5
Oneida	\$105,000.00	3
Overton County	\$70,000.00	2
Perry County	\$140,000.00	4
Putnam County	\$175,000.00	5
Roane County	\$70,000.00	2
Robertson County	\$280,000.00	8
Scott County	\$175,000.00	5
Smith County	\$140,000.00	4
Sullivan County	\$245,000.00	7
Sumner County	\$525,000.00	15
Tipton County	\$245,000.00	7
Trenton	\$70,000.00	2
Unicoi County	\$35,000.00	1
Union City	\$35,000.00	1
Union County	\$70,000.00	2
Van Buren County	\$70,000.00	2
Wayne County	\$280,000.00	8
West Carroll Sp Dist	\$35,000.00	1
Williamson County	\$35,000.00	1
Wilson County	\$35,000.00	1
	\$7,446,700.00	213

Source: Tennessee Department of Education.



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